U.S. Department of Education
2010 - Blue Ribbon Schools Program

Type of School: (Check all that apply) [] Charter [] Title I [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal: Dr. Guido Sabelli

Official School Name: Vinson-Owen Elementary

School Mailing Address:
75 Johnson Road
Winchester, MA 01890-2299

County: Middlesex State School Code Number*: 03440025

Telephone: (781) 721-7019 Fax: (781) 729-2681

Web site/URL: http://www.winchester.k12.ma.us/ E-mail: gsabelli@winchester.k12.ma.us

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*: Mr. William McAlduff

District Name: Winchester Tel: (781) 721-7000

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Michael Schindelman

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*
The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Blue Ribbon Schools Project Manager (aba.kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)

2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2009-2010 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.

4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.

5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2003.

6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 or 2009.

7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.

10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district: (per district designation)

5	Elementary schools (includes K-8)
1	Middle/Junior high schools
1	High schools
0	K-12 schools
7	**TOTAL**

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 10865

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

[ ] Urban or large central city
[ ] Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
[X] Suburban
[ ] Small city or town in a rural area
[ ] Rural

4. 18 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK			0	**6**			0
K	21	20	41	**7**			0
1	20	31	51	**8**			0
2	20	20	40	**9**			0
3	23	20	43	**10**			0
4	33	25	58	**11**			0
5	22	33	55	**12**			0
		TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL					288

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:

____	% American Indian or Alaska Native
14	% Asian
____	% Black or African American
____	% Hispanic or Latino
____	% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
81	% White
5	% Two or more races
100	**% Total**

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 0 %

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

(1)	Number of students who transferred ***to*** the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	1
(2)	Number of students who transferred ***from*** the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	1
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	2
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	285
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.007
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	0.702

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 6 %

Total number limited English proficient 17

Number of languages represented: 9

Specify languages:

Chinese, Greek, Arabic, Japanese, Russian, Korean, Czech, French, Dutch

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 1 %

Total number students who qualify: 3

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 14 %

Total Number of Students Served: 41

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

1	Autism		Orthopedic Impairment
	Deafness	4	Other Health Impaired
	Deaf-Blindness	4	Specific Learning Disability
	Emotional Disturbance	8	Speech or Language Impairment
2	Hearing Impairment		Traumatic Brain Injury
	Mental Retardation		Visual Impairment Including Blindness
2	Multiple Disabilities	20	Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	Full-Time	**Part-Time**
Administrator(s)	1	
Classroom teachers	15	
Special resource teachers/specialists	10	
Paraprofessionals	3	
Support staff	1	
Total number	30	0

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 **19 :1**

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
Daily teacher attendance	95%	94%	93%	98%	96%
Teacher turnover rate	4%	12%	8%	4%	4%
Student dropout rate	%	%	%	%	%

Please provide all explanations below.

Teacher attendance below 95% in 2006-2007 and 2009-2008 due to maternity and family health issues.

Teacher turnover rate 12% 2007-2008 due to retirement and teacher resigning to raise family.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2009 are doing as of the Fall 2009.

Graduating class size	_____	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	_____	%
Enrolled in a community college	_____	%
Enrolled in vocational training	_____	%
Found employment	_____	%
Military service	_____	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	_____	%
Unknown	_____	%
Total	_____	%

PART III - SUMMARY

Nestled into the rolling hills of what was once Thomson Farm, Vinson-Owen Elementary School has a long history of excellence. Built in 1962, the school was named in memory of former Winchester residents Maribel Vinson Owen and her daughters, Maribel and Laurence Owen. These three women, along with 58 others, died in a tragic plane crash in 1961 while en route to The World Figure Skating Competition in Prague. Today, the teachers, administration and students find inspiration in their dedication to goals, willingness to perform hard work and commitment to excellence.

By far, the school's greatest strength is its focus on "core values" and the committed staff and school community members who have volunteered their time over the years to plan and coordinate activities and programs that promote our 3R's; Respect, Responsibility, and Reasoning.

Respect – We strive to live and learn with positive role models: Vinson-Owen is a place where it's not enough that children show respect for themselves and for other children, but more importantly, it is a place where the adults demonstrate a respect for the children based on a firm belief that all children are good by nature and that they can, and want, to do well. We are proud that Vinson-Owen is a place where:

- children do the right thing because they want to and not because they have to,
- it's ok to say "I don't understand",
- children will ask a child standing alone on the playground if he wants to play,
- students understand their responsibility for creating a good community,
- children do their best because they know that they can do well, and because,
- they know that their teachers believe in them.

Responsibility - We strive to be a caring community, committed to action big and small: From within the Open Circles[1] in our classrooms, to the bags of food and toiletry items that the children deliver to the local food bank, to the road we helped to build in Bali[2], we value our role in preparing children to take their place in a democratic society. As such, our most prized accomplishment is a learning community in which the children in the kindergarten try very hard not to "crinkle anyone's heart" and a third grader is quick to take an opportunity to "pass it forward**".** When a fifth grader stops to help a small child pull open the heavy outside door on a cold morning, one can't help but smile knowing that he is taking his responsibility to be a role model seriously; just as it was, years earlier**,** when he might have been that small child.

Reason - We strive to be great educators and innovators: At Vinson-Owen, we understand the importance of holding on to the values that are basic to a democratic society and the traditions that promote these ideals. However, in order to prepare students adequately for the world they will live in, we also recognize our responsibility to lead in areas where we see that changes in society have created the need or opportunity to change how or what we teach. Some examples of how we have fulfilled this obligation follow:

- Education-Business Collaboration: In the early 1990's Vinson-Owen initiated a collaborative effort between Digital Equipment Corporation, Continental Cablevision, and the Winchester Public Schools to build one of the first Wide Area Networks using the first generation of cable modems to link the town's five elementary schools via the town's cable service. The network continues to provide the basic infrastructure for the town and, soon after it was demonstrated publicly, it became the model adopted by most local school systems. Vinson-Owen continues to find ways to use technology to improve teaching and learning.

- Math Curriculum: Subsequent to the call from the NCMT for reform in the way mathematics was being taught in America's schools, the Vinson-Owen School became involved in one of the most

successful and innovative projects to come out of the reform effort. Working with the publishers of the mathematics program developed at the University of Chicago, teachers at the Vinson-Owen School agreed to become a pilot site for the materials that eventually became the "Everyday Math Program". Because the teachers were using the new materials in their classrooms and sending their comments and suggestions back to the company, they not only understood how the program worked, but they also understood the theory behind it. It is a hallmark of the Vinson-Owen School that teachers not only have knowledge of what constitutes "best practice", but they are skilled in their practice and understand why it is considered best practice.

While many things have changed over the years, these core values continue to sustain our success. Basic to this success has been our efforts to make reasoned decisions based upon what's best for the children, rather than on fad or political gain. Equally important, we have a community of parents, teachers, and children who understand and take their responsibilities seriously. We are committed to maintaining a community characterized by respect for individual differences, kindness, understanding and fair play.

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[1] Open Circle social learning program http://www.open-circle.org/
[2] Bali, Indonesia road http://dusun-butiyang.blogspot.com

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. **Assessment Results:**

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is designed to assess student learning in accordance with the Curriculum Frameworks standards established by the state. There are four performance levels in this assessment system: advanced/above proficient, proficient, needs improvement and warning/failing. The performance level "proficient" demonstrates that a student is meeting the standard for the MCAS test. State assessment information website: http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/

Vinson-Owen students have consistently demonstrated high levels of achievement in the MCAS. School data can be viewed at the DESE website: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas/performance_level.aspx?linkid=32&orgcode=03440025&orgtypecode=6&&fycode=2009

In all three grade levels tested, results in both subjects have remained consistently high. There is little fluctuation between the years at each grade level for each subject. Complete data for grade 3 and grade 5 has only been available for four years, as state testing in Mathematics in grade 3 was initiated in 2006 and testing in grade 5 in both Reading/English Language Arts and Mathematics was initiated in 2006. Highlights from the data for these assessments follow:

Grade 4 ELA and Mathematics 2005 - 2009 (5 years) No students in warning/failing category

Grade 3 ELA 2006 - 2009 (4 years) Steady improvement in Reading/ELA assessments. First year 2% students in warning category, no students in this category for three years 2007-2009

Grade 3 Math 2007 - 2009 (3 years) Only 2% of students in warning/failing category

Grade 5 ELA 2006 - 2009 (4 years) No students in warning/failing category

Grade 5 Math 2006 - 2009 (4 years) Students in warning/failing category dropped from 5% in 2006 to no students in warning/failing category in 2009

Vinson-Owen School Aggregate Results:

2008 Comparative Data

- 91 % of students scored at or above the proficient level in English Language Arts (27 percentage points above the state average)
- 88 % scored at or above the proficient level in Mathematics (33 percentage points above the state average).
- In both subject areas, the percentage of advanced students (ELA-48% MATH-58%) was 34 percentage points above the state average.

2009 Comparative Data

- 95 % of students scored at or above the proficient level in ELA (28 percentage points above the state average)
- 87% scored at or above the proficient level in Mathematics (32 percentage points above the state average)
- In ELA, the percentage of advanced students (50%) was 34 percentage points above the state average
- In Mathematics, the percentage of advanced students (60%) was 37 percentage points above the state average.

Only two years that school aggregate comparative data is available from the DESE.

Another lens for viewing student achievement using results from the MCAS is the Student Growth Percentiles (SGP). These reports measure how much a student or group of students have grown or changed in their achievement levels to complement the traditional MCAS scaled scores and performance levels. Student growth percentiles measure how a student changed from one year to the next relative to other students with similar MCAS test score histories. School growth reports are developed by aggregating the SGP for all students in the school to determine the median student growth percentile. According to the growth model results, "high growth" is defined as growth in a subject at or above the 60th percentile.

Massachusetts Education Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester states that, "Never before have we provided as complete a picture to evaluate student performance. By examining achievement and growth over time we have a more robust profile of school effectiveness than once-a-year MCAS scores alone provide."
http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=5114

Vinson-Owen has been identified as the only elementary school in Massachusetts demonstrating both high achievement and high growth in both Reading/English Language Arts and Mathematics in 2009. (***High Achievement and High Growth:*** Schools with 95 percent of students above proficient in ELA and 85 percent above proficient in Math in 2009 and median growth at the 60th percentile or higher in 2008 and 2009).

	High Achievement (% At/Above Proficient)	High Growth (median SPG At/Above 60%)
English Language Arts	95	71.0 (2008) 73.5 (2009)
Mathematics	87	60.0 (2008) 72.0 (2009)

2. **Using Assessment Results:**

Teachers use formative and summative assessment data to inform instruction for individuals and small groups as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and methods of instruction.

In the primary grades, all students are assessed through the Early Intervention Reading Program to identify students in need of intervention. Identified students receive daily reading instruction from their classroom teacher and, in addition, they receive instruction from a reading specialist. Student progress is assessed in January and again in June. Classroom teachers use the DRA2 in combination with running records and teacher observation during guided reading instruction to monitor the progress of all students and to make instructional decisions.

Teachers use the techniques outlined in the book, Results Now, by Smocker to systematically improve instruction using assessment results. An example is the way that teachers used assessment data from the MCAS to consistently improve student and school performance in writing over a five year period.

Each year, teachers systematically analyze their students' writing scores in three areas of writing composition and four areas of writing conventions. Using the students' actual writing provided by the Department of Education along with the test scores, teachers create a database that can be sorted to find examples of student work that were rated high or low in any of the areas assessed. Using the samples to compare and contrast high and low samples in each area, teachers instruct the students on what a well-written narrative looks and sounds like. In addition, by projecting the samples on a white board and working with the student to rewrite the weak areas, students become better and better at identifying the weak areas and improving the narratives on their own.

The teachers use a loose leaf binder to compile instructional materials and create a specific sequence and pacing guide to develop the students' skills in each area. During the course of the year, as the students are taught the component skills in each area, these skills become additional areas for proof-reading and editing. Because the teachers use individual conferences to assess each student's writing, they are able to differentiate their instruction based upon student needs. Each teacher has become adept at modifying instruction in ways that seem to ensure that every student achieves to a high standard, and despite having achieved the highest ELA scores in the state this spring, the teachers dutifully continue to analyze the yearly results and make modifications to their program and the binder.

3. **Communicating Assessment Results:**

There are many avenues in place at Vinson-Owen for communicating student performance. All teachers conference with students about their work for the purposes of demonstrating specific areas of progress, providing corrective feedback, instruction, and praise, and for setting short and long term goals. Students learn to evaluate their work at an early age. They take pride in their accomplishments and play an active role in developing plans for improvement. Goal setting is practiced in all grades, and has become an important component in the education of our students.

Within the first six weeks of school, students and parents meet formally with the classroom teacher to develop goals for the year. State assessment results from the MCAS test from the end of the previous school year are released in late September and mailed to the parents of each student. The results for each child are reviewed at the October conferences with parents, and the assessment results are considered when developing goals for the new school year. Grade level standards in all curriculum areas are explained to the parents at the conferences, along with the rubrics used to evaluate student performance.

Formal progress reports are distributed in early December, March and June. Following the distribution of progress reports in March, teachers again conference with parents to review the progress of their child. Informal conferences often take place throughout the year, as well as via email and phone conversations to monitor student performance. The quality of the relationships that the school establishes with parents and with the community is a source of pride and a major component of our success.

In addition to student/teacher and parent/teacher communication, the Vinson-Owen principal actively communicates our assessment results to the larger school community at one of the monthly Parents' Association meetings. Within the Winchester community, assessment results are presented to the School Committee at a formal meeting, and the meetings are broadcast through the local cable channel. Assessment results are also a major component of the yearly School Improvement Plan, which is a public document.

4. **Sharing Success:**

Winchester has a very strong commitment to professional development, teacher collaboration, and in promoting leadership at all levels. One component of this commitment are the curriculum areas steering teams made up of teacher representatives from each of the elementary schools. CAST are the primary vehicle for evaluating and developing curriculum for the district schools. Through participation in CAST, formal

mentoring programs and professional learning communities, the teachers at Vinson-Owen continually share their success with their peers in the school and the district.

As described above, the teachers at the Vinson-Owen School have developed a writing program that has been invaluable in developing the writing skills of our students. These teachers have generously shared their teaching strategies with colleagues throughout the district at monthly grade level meetings and have served on district Curriculum Area Steering Teams to share their expertise in English Language Arts. Similarly, our first grade teachers formed a professional learning community with other first grade teachers in the district to share their experiences with the newly adopted writing program. All Curriculum Area Steering Teams, including ELA, math, science, social studies and technology have always had representatives from the Vinson-Owen School to help shape district curriculum decisions and goals. Our teaching staff actively participates in many professional learning communities within the district to share their knowledge and teaching practices.

Our successes are also shared with the larger community, the town of Winchester. Each year the school principal, with the assistance of the School Council, prepares the Vinson-Owen School Improvement Plan and presents the plan to the School Committee. The School Improvement Plan chronicles the progress the school has made in achieving the educational goals of the district and the school's educational goals, as established by the principal and the School Council. Assessment data is included in the School Improvement Plan and shared with the community at this time.

Learning from each other and working together to learn new things and reach common goals is an important part of the culture at Vinson-Owen. If awarded Blue Ribbon School status, we will continue to share our teaching practices within our school and the greater community to benefit all children.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. **Curriculum:**

Student outcomes, which are in alignment with the Massachusetts Frameworks, are continuously reviewed in light of formative and summative evaluation of student work. Classroom teachers, the Media Specialist, and the principal meet by grade level on a weekly basis to compare student work to established standards and plan instruction based upon student readiness. All decisions around curriculum and instruction are focused upon finding solutions to the fundamental question posed by Benjamin Bloom. That is, "How can we create classroom learning environments that are as effective as one-to-one instruction?"

Mathematics: Teachers continue to embrace the philosophy and methodology developed by the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project. However, based upon assessment data from the MCAS, teachers have added or changed lessons in areas shown to be relatively weak and have rearranged the sequence of lessons when necessary to insure the content validity of the assessment. The effectiveness of this approach is supported by consistent high performance and demonstrated growth in MCAS testing.

Reading: Our reading program emphasizes early and intensive intervention based upon assessment data and the use of quality literature in a wide variety of genres. In contrast to most commercially available reading programs, which typically employ a standard structure for skill development and a systematic approach to instruction which may emphasize one method or strategy for decoding over another, the balanced approach used in Guided Reading teaches multiple strategies for students to draw upon. Teachers monitor the use of these strategies by the reader using teacher observation during small group instruction and analysis of individual running records. In this way, the teacher maintains the appropriate level of text relative to the instructional needs of the students.

Writing: Our writing program has developed over the years to a finely-tuned program that encourages children to know that they are writers. In the primary grades, we teach Units of Study, developed by Lucy Calkins. This program follows a writing workshop model, and encourages students to write from authentic experiences. As students progress to the intermediate grades, instruction is based upon a combination of teacher developed curriculum and the Empowering Writers program, which focuses on offering students whole class instruction, teacher modeling, guided practice opportunities, scope and sequence for instruction, and clear, measurable expectations in narrative and expository writing.

Science: The Science program is a combination of hands-on kits developed by various commercial vendors, a text book published by Scott Foresman, and science units made up of lessons developed by Vinson-Owen teachers through a grant from the Winchester Foundation for Educational Excellence, a local non-profit that funds innovative projects in the public schools. The teachers worked with a science consultant and an environmentalist to develop hands-on lessons to teach grade level content using the "Science Park" adjacent to the school. Teachers worked collaboratively with the consultants in an online workspace to write these units using "Backward Design" as the strategy for writing the curriculum.

Social Studies: In accordance with the state curriculum standards, our curriculum emphasizes U.S. history and geography, from an understanding of neighborhood and community in the primary grades to a study of colonial America and the early republic in fifth grade. The four disciplines of history, geography, economics, and civics and government are integrated into our teaching, supporting a coherent historical narrative. Instruction is delivered in a variety of ways, including teacher-created activities, online resources, enrichment activities, such as field trips and in-school enrichment, and the added support of a variety of textbooks.

Music: Students are encouraged to explore music through singing, composition, improvisation, and instrumental music during their weekly music classes. In addition to weekly small group instrumental lessons there is also a combined band that meets before school every week.

Art: Our art curriculum seeks to provide all students with a strong and challenging art education and to expose children at each grade level to a wide variety of two and three dimensional materials. The units are developed to teach students to express themselves visually and emotionally, to plan, build, refine and reflect.

Physical Education: The Wellness curriculum consist of units designed so that all who are exposed to the curriculum will feel successful and secure in their abilities and will enjoy being physically active. Students develop locomotor and manipulative skills, and also their communication and social skills through cooperative and team based activities. The goal of the wellness department is to help students develop the understanding, strategies, attitudes and behaviors needed for a healthy life.

Our parent-run school enrichment committee plans rich in-house activities as well as field trips to enhance many curriculum areas. For example, each year educators from the Discovery Museum visit our school to lead the children in hands-on science lessons, while other classes take field trips to the Discovery Museum. Examples of other field trips which support our curriculum include: Each year grade five visits the Blue Hills Weather Observatory, and our kindergarten children visit the Museum of Natural History at Harvard University. Third grade classes visit the Massachusetts State House in Boston and walk the Freedom Trail, while the fourth grade classes take a field trip to the Lowell Mills in Lowell, Massachusetts to see what life was like for immigrants to Massachusetts in the 19th century.

2a. **(Elementary Schools) Reading**:
(This question is for elementary schools only)

At Vinson-Owen we strive to foster a lifelong love of reading and develop excellent readers who are also great thinkers. We do this by utilizing ongoing research, administering frequent assessments, differentiating instruction, and integrating reading and writing. In our practices, we use a balanced literacy approach, which includes reading workshop, writing workshop, word study, interactive writing, independent reading, and interactive read-alouds. Over the years, teachers have worked to build their classroom libraries and shared book closets so that they reflect the range of reading levels in our classrooms and offer children a variety of genres. All children at Vinson-Owen are matched with books at their level.

In grades K-2, a reading workshop model is used. Within this workshop, whole class, small group, and individual instruction takes place. Reading strategies (accuracy, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary) are introduced and modeled through interactive read-alouds. Students then have the opportunity to apply these strategies in their independent reading and guided reading groups. Word study instruction is integrated into guided reading lessons, as well as presented in differentiated groups during a separate word study block. Grouping is flexible, and is based on data obtained from informal and formal assessments, such as DRAs, running records, and word study feature inventories.

In grades 3-5, instruction is represented through a wide range of activities which align with a balanced literacy approach. Activities include guided reading, literature circles, and independent reading. As children become more proficient at independently applying reading strategies, they are encouraged to share their thinking through conversation in these literature circles. The independent reading program, which is tailored to student needs and constructed by teachers, integrates reading and writing and provides students the opportunity to apply these strategies in their daily reading lives.

3. **Additional Curriculum Area:**

The skills students acquire through authentic hands-on experience with science content are essential to the school's mission to prepare students for the twenty first century. Teachers at the Vinson-Owen School have developed many authentic learning opportunities that use technology and engage students in projects that emphasize learning both the process and the content of science as outlined in the MA Science and Technology Frameworks. In addition, we strive to encourage awareness of environmental issues through our recycling and conservation programs. Our goal is to provide the foundation for building a level of understanding sufficient to make reasoned decisions around the increasingly complex issues that we will continue to face in the 21st century.

While walking through or around the Vinson-Owen School on any given day during the school year, one might come across any of the following activities that demonstrate how science is integrated into the daily lives of the students:

- A first grade class studying weather is using the school's intranet to access the school's weather station as part of the day's opening routine. A child volunteers to record the current temperature on a chart projected onto the smartboard. When she does, the teacher uses the chart to create a bar graph comparing the daily temperatures for the week.

- In a second grade classroom, children are learning how an organism's habitat needs to provide for its basic needs. The class just finished a read-aloud about the sun, and they are discussing the important role that it plays in our lives. The teacher says it might be a good day to record changes in the areas of the science park that they had marked off for that purpose earlier in the year. She tells the children to bring their notebooks with them out to recess. When the bell rings signaling the end of recess, the class heads toward the science park, excited about what might have changed on the plot of ground they are observing throughout the year. Each area is marked off by four flags connected by blue ribbon and for the next ten minutes the children carefully record their observations in their journals, including the time of day and the amount of sun vs. shade observed. Before heading back, each child takes several pictures with the digital camera that will help them determine what organisms might or might not find their area to be a suitable habitat.

- The fifth grade students are getting a little anxious. They are expecting two graduate students from Tufts University, who are teaching them to build and program robots using Lego Robotic Kits designed by engineers at the university. Today they will learn how a motion sensor can be incorporated into the designs of their robots. While they know the basics of the programming language, each team will have to work together and "think like engineers" to design and program their robot to use the sensor to initiate a sequence of actions.

- During lunch there are a number of children going from classroom to classroom with buckets and barrels. The ones with the different colored barrels are recycling and the children with the buckets are collecting leftovers suitable for the three large composting bins in the back of the school. While they don't look like much now, their contents will play an important role in the spring when we will plant a school garden where the children will see firsthand the lifecycle of various plants, and what plants need to survive. The students will plant seeds, weed the garden, and observe food chains and life cycles in the garden.

Our hope is that through the opportunities we provide, our students will develop a deep understanding of basic concepts and a true sense of appreciation for scientific inquiry as well as a respectful and responsible attitude toward the environment.

4. **Instructional Methods:**

Fundamental to the mission of the Vinson-Owen School is the goal of meeting the diverse needs of all its students. It is our belief that informed instruction provided by skilled teachers is the most effective way to insure that we achieve this goal. A central focus in this effort is promotion of an atmosphere of respect for individual differences and an emphasis on effort and process, and not simply on finding the correct answer.

Decades have passed and much has changed since Bloom reported that children given one-to-one instruction can, on average, score as much as two grade levels ahead of children taught under typical classroom conditions. The question he posed at the time is not only still relevant, but forms the basis for our approach to differentiating instruction. Bloom asked what conditions could be created in classrooms that would approximate the conditions of one-to-one instruction. For Bloom, these optimal learning conditions exist when instruction is guided by knowledge of the student's acquisition of the prerequisite skills and knowledge required by the learning task, when there is on-going development of appropriate learning tasks at the child's level of readiness, and when there is analysis of student performance with on-going corrective feedback and instruction as needed to maintain student motivation and successful participation. It is our belief that attempts to differentiate instruction are successful to the extent that these conditions can be maintained for all, or almost all, students throughout the school day. At Vinson-Owen, our effort to maintain optimal conditions take many different forms involving many different people in many different roles.

In many instances differentiation is built into classroom practice, especially in reading where classroom teachers use flexible groups that change composition based upon student needs. While this type of small group direct instruction to small groups is very effective at maintaining optimal conditions for these students, it is also essential that the activities of students who must work independently of the directed groups are closely monitored for student engagement, and that there is follow-up by the teacher. Individual writing conferences is another method that is very effective in differentiating skill development in writing, as are assessment instruments that are used in curriculum areas where children can be grouped by developmental stages. Students are then provided with the correct level of instruction in areas such as phonics, word-study, and vocabulary development. Careful monitoring of skill development in these areas can prevent "skill gaps" from compounding over time and causing some students to fall further and further behind.

Throughout the course of the day other professionals with specialized knowledge and skills are also available to ensure that each child has a successful learning experience. These include reading specialists, ELL instructors, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, special educators, school psychologists, behavioral consultants and teaching assistants. In addition, we also employ a multitude of assistive technology programs and devices to enhance student learning. Some examples of these resources include books on tape, Kurtzweil, Lexia, Successmaker, Co-Writer, interactive whiteboards and a variety of web resources that are available through the school intranet to support differentiation.

5. **Professional Development:**

Professional development is on-going and continuously evolving based upon: 1. observation of student work, 2. an overarching focus or direction that the school has chosen to pursue, and 3. the professional interests of individuals or groups within the school. What ties these three levels together and drives our efforts is a common interest in creating safe and supportive environments that are productive and effective in providing learning conditions that are optimal for as many students as possible for as much of the school day as possible. Over the years, this interest has spawned significant efforts in areas such as development of our Core Values Program, including adoption of Open Circle and our community service program. A desire to use the best strategies for designing curriculum led to a productive relationship with graduate students at Harvard's Project Zero who worked with teachers using "Understanding by Design" as the design strategy to develop

new curriculum units. Most recently, a series of workshops in understanding and helping children with executive function disorders, led to more in-depth work with experts in the field who came to the school to work with teachers in their classrooms during the school day. While all of these have contributed to our success, the following examples most clearly demonstrate how these activities support student learning that is aligned with content standards.

Because we have chosen to use a reading approach that is not prepackaged commercially, professional development is the single most important factor in achieving and improving upon high student achievement in reading. Simply put, to be effective, this approach presupposes the teacher's knowledge and understanding of how children learn to read and their willingness to stay current with the literature and engage in professional development on an ongoing basis. Early on in this process, the teachers established a year long whole school study group around key resources and books, such as Strategies That Work, for teaching reading comprehension and the book, Mosaic of Thought , which brought together years of research on meta-cognition and the psycholinguistic aspects of reading instruction. In addition, teachers have attended many in-service programs to learn more about guiding reading and advanced ways to use assessment data to inform instructional decisions. As described above, the teachers have used this knowledge to write student outcomes and to establish student benchmarks to manage the reading program and to measure and report student growth.

Another example is how one teacher's interest in the Lucy Calkins Writing Program led to its adoption district-wide as the K-2 Writing Program. Through a grant funded by the Winchester Foundation for Educational Excellence, three Vinson-Owen teachers were able to attend training during a summer institute. The teachers then established a Professional Learning Community to introduce this writing program to other K-2 teachers in the district. A major focus for this group was to develop standards with benchmarks and scoring rubrics to assess and report student progress in writing and to insure that student outcomes were in alignment with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

One final example typifies the spirit of the Vinson-Owen faculty. Recognizing the educational value in using the nature preserve adjacent to the school as an outdoor laboratory for the students, the teachers made a commitment to research aspects of the "science park" as they relate to the science frameworks for their grade level. They then brought together the varied resources needed to create and implement lessons that effectively utilize this unique opportunity.

6. **School Leadership:**

Drive up to the Vinson-Owen School on any morning and you will find our principal waiting at the curb. As the buses and cars arrive he is there to greet the children and parents, keep watch over the traffic in our small parking area and help small children with big doors. He is a constant in the lives of the children. The children know it, the parents know it, and the staff knows it. His visibility speaks of the value that is integral to the leadership of our school, and often hard to find in the world: Trust.

Our principal first and foremost trusts his staff. He is quite clear about his expectations for the students: that they each have an exemplary educational experience. He supports, advocates and encourages his staff to provide that experience. Common planning time is one way in which he provides teachers at the same grade level a way to work together. He is part of this planning time and keeps us focused that any new idea or program is given careful consideration of the needs of the students and best practices.

Dr. Sabelli encourages each of us to pursue our interests and talents. For example, teachers from Vinson-Owen were interested in the Lucy Calkin's writing curriculum. Dr. Sabelli supported and encouraged their interest, they received training in the program, and it has now been adopted by the district. Dr. Sabelli has always been a leader in the school district in bringing innovative technology to our school. If teachers are interested, Dr. Sabelli makes it happen. Dr. Sabelli developed a school intranet for our staff and students to

promote the use of technology and to make lessons and resources easily available for the school community. This visionary approach to technology has been instrumental in the Vinson-Owen School being at the forefront in the use of technology in education within our community.

Not only does Dr. Sabelli support and lead his staff in academic areas, but his leadership in teaching our students core values is exemplary. Our Core Values team, established by Dr. Sabelli, focuses on teaching our students what it means to belong to a community. Each month at our all school assembly, we focus on a community service project. This might be donating food for a local food pantry, Coats for Kids, Trick or Treat for Unicef, Pennies for Patients, or another service project. Through the initiative of one of our teachers, students from the Vinson-Owen School became involved in raising enough money to have a road built for a community in Bali, Indonesia. Dr. Sabelli was very supportive of this initiative and brought the whole school together for this project. The school staff is encouraged and motivated to pursue new ideas and interests in all areas to better serve our students.

This environment leads to other kinds of trust and respect. Not only do we feel professionally supported but also personally supported. Our school is a place of shared ideas and supportive colleagues. Perhaps the most visible result of how well this school works is the fact that, in the past five years, three members of our staff have gone on to become principals at other Massachusetts schools, having Dr. Sabelli as their mentor. Personally, the staff knows that their family and personal health needs are respected and valued. His open door policy is a comforting reminder that his respect and supportive ear for each and every staff member is never ending.

Dr. Sabelli's support and caring extends far beyond the staff at Vinson-Owen. Over the years he has established a wonderful rapport with the parents of our students, again offering unlimited trust, respect and concern for the children in our school. We would not be the school we are without the support of our parent community. They have given endless time, resources and personal expertise to help us be the best school we can be. The Vinson-Owen staff is very thankful for the support the Parents Association extends to us. The leadership from this group has worked tirelessly over the years to ensure that the teachers have what we need to give their children the best educational experience possible every day.

This leads to a school culture of teamwork and shared decision making, where teachers feel empowered to take on new and innovate curricula and to utilize technology in many ways throughout the school. Dr. Sabelli's leadership inspires each staff member to model the core values of respect, responsibility and reasoning every day, and to always stay focused on what is best for our students. He encourages each staff member to bring the best of ourselves to school each and every day for the students at Vinson-Owen.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 3 Test: MCAS

Edition/Publication Year: 2004 Publisher: Measured Progress, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient	86	87	96	81	
Advanced / Above Proficient	56	65	48	13	
Number of students tested	54	54	52	60	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient	70				
Advanced / Above Proficient	10				
Number of students tested	10				
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					

Notes:
State testing for Mathematics in grade 3 began in 2005-2006 school year, therefore no data is available for 2004-2005,

Subject: Reading Grade: 3 Test: MCAS

Edition/Publication Year: 2004 Publisher: Measured Progress, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient	93	85	79	84	84
Advanced/ Above Proficient	43	48	37	47	0
Number of students tested	54	54	52	60	56
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced/ Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced/ Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced/ Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient	80				
Advanced/ Above Proficient	10				
Number of students tested	10				
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced/ Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced/ Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					

Notes:
In 2004-2005 in Reading for grade 3, Advanced / Above proficient scores were not reported by the state. Instead, they were grouped with "proficient plus advanced / above proficient". As a result, only three reporting categories available from the state.

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 4 Test: MCAS

Edition/Publication Year: 2004 Publisher: Measured Progress, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient	83	90	86	85	83
Advanced / Above Proficient	68	46	68	48	52
Number of students tested	53	52	60	52	65
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					

Notes:
No subgroups reported because no subgroup had more than 10 students.

Subject: Reading Grade: 4 Test: MCAS

Edition/Publication Year: 2004 Publisher: Measured Progress, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient	96	92	98	84	90
Advanced / Above Proficient	62	43	58	29	32
Number of students tested	53	51	60	51	65
Percent of total students tested	100	98	100	98	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

No subgroups reported because fewer than 10 students in subgroup categories.

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 5 Test: MCAS

Edition/Publication Year: 2004 Publisher: Measured Progress, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient	91	88	85	78	
Advanced / Above Proficient	56	63	32	45	
Number of students tested	55	59	53	64	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient		50			
Advanced / Above Proficient		20			
Number of students tested		10			
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

State testing in Mathematics for fifth grade did not begin until 2005-2006 school year, therefore, no data is available for school year 2004-2005.

Subject: Reading Grade: 5 Test: MCAS

Edition/Publication Year: 2004 Publisher: Measured Progress, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient	95	95	87	88	
Advanced / Above Proficient	44	53	36	41	
Number of students tested	55	59	53	64	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient		70			
Advanced / Above Proficient		20			
Number of students tested		10			
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Proficient plus Advanced / Above Proficient					
Advanced / Above Proficient					
Number of students tested					

Notes:
State testing in Reading / ELA for fifth grade did not begin until 2005-2006 school year, therefore, no data is available for school year 2004-2005.